



# ***SUPERINTENDENT'S GUIDE TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS***



Office of Communications  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Revised May 2001

***SUPERINTENDENT'S  
GUIDE  
TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS***

# ***SUPERINTENDENT'S GUIDE TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS***

This guide is a production of  
the National Park Service,  
Office of Communications  
Revised May 2001

John Quinley, editor

Contributions by:

David Barna  
Sandra Alley  
Holly Bundock  
Ricardo Lewis  
Duncan Morrow  
Steve Pittleman  
William G. Thomas  
Paul Winegar

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PREFACE

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>THE MEDIA .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	The News and the Press	
1.2	Who's Who and What Do They Do	
1.3	The Written Word Still Rules	
1.4	Preparing News Releases	
1.5	News Release Format	
1.6	What Makes Good Writing	
1.7	Photographs and Captions	
1.8	Distributing News Releases	
1.9	Stock Information Needs	
1.10	Media Advisories	
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>INTERVIEWS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1	Basics	
2.2	The Enemy Within	
2.3	Comments, Please!	
2.4	Media Specifics	
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>TELEVISION &amp; RADIO .....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1	Think Visually	
3.2	Logistical Needs	
3.3	Interviews	
3.4	Deadlines	
3.5	Handouts	
3.6	Technical Standards	
3.7	Radio	
3.8	Public Service Announcements	
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>THE WORLD WIDE WEB .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>A BROADER PUBLIC AFFAIRS PERSPECTIVE .....</b>	<b>22</b>
5.1	Public Affairs Competency	
5.2	Other Public Affairs Considerations	
5.3	When Errors Happen	
5.4	Personal Opinion	
5.5	Other Expressions	
<b>Section 6</b>	<b>CRIMES AND CALAMITIES .....</b>	<b>27</b>
6.1	Predictable Demands	
6.2	The Usual Sequence of Events	
6.3	Bringing Everyone Together	

6.4	Pooling	
6.5	Public Information or Public Affairs	
6.6	Credentials	
6.7	Photographs	
6.8	Incident Command Team	
6.9	What the Spokesperson May Not Do	
<b>Section 7</b>	<b>STAGING PUBLIC MEETINGS</b>	34
7.1	Event Time!	
<b>Section 8</b>	<b>STAGING A SPECIAL EVENT</b>	35
8.1	Date and Time	
8.2	Media Arrangements	
8.3	Invitations	
8.4	Protocol	
8.5	The Platform	
8.6	Special Needs	
8.7	After the Event	
<b>Section 9</b>	<b>COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY</b>	39
<b>Section 10</b>	<b>WHAT THE SERVICE NEEDS FROM YOU</b>	40
10.1	Electric Courier	
10.2	News Clippings	
10.3	Highlights	
<b>Section 11</b>	<b>SPEECHES</b>	42
<b>Section 12</b>	<b>FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT</b>	43
12.1	FOIA Basics	
12.2	Public Affairs Component	
<b>APPENDICES</b>		45
<b>APPENDIX 1:</b>		
	Special Events Checklist	46
<b>APPENDIX 2:</b>		
	Public Affairs Contacts	50
<b>APPENDIX 3:</b>		
	InfoZone List Instructions	51
<b>APPENDIX 4:</b>		
	Internet Listings for Print and Electronic Media, Environmental Organizations, and Other Useful Resources	52
<b>APPENDIX 5:</b>		
	Protocol In-depth	55

## PREFACE

The American public likes parks, and, by extension, the National Park Service.

We may not have fully earned that reputation, but must work hard to maintain it and, ideally, build on it.

Besides the fact that we manage a lot of great places, one reason for our popularity is a reputation for candor and honesty. There is no substitute for truth. Truth serves both the parks and the public and it serves best when it is presented openly, quickly, clearly, and concisely.

The public interest in park resources and park management is high, as is the desire for practical visitor information about parks. The means of reaching the public have changed dramatically over the last 20 years. If you don't believe that, remember when this guide was last published in 1988 we didn't mention fax machines!

But one fact has remained constant since the earliest days of the NPS — if we inform people about parks and the Park Service only after they have arrived at a park doorstep, we have cheated the visitors and ourselves.

The best — but by no means the only — tool to reach the public economically and easily is the news media. The media can help us or hurt us. They will do either, both as a result of how we work with them and the management decisions we make. No amount of public affairs work will rescue a bad decision.

You have many tools other than the traditional media in the box: there's a growing worldwide information presence on the Internet; industry groups influence public and political thinking and actions; friends groups and other partners carry our message along with their own; multi-media presentations on cd-roms and videos can carry our message into people's homes; and simple speeches can still move thousands of people.

Working with each of these tools is part of a full public affairs program. The goal of this guide is to introduce you to the tools, help you and your staff work toward mastery of some, and, maybe most importantly, to know when and where to seek the advice of others whose experiences could help you in your work.